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PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR COMMUNITY: GET VACCINATED TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS A



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Martin County, FL – The Florida Department of Health is urging residents to take steps to stop the spread of hepatitis A, which is on the rise in Florida and in parts of the [United States](#).

The Florida Department of Health in Martin County is confirming 32 cases of hepatitis A and 5 deaths associated with complications from the virus.

“Our community is one of many communities across the state and the nation experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak.” said Carolann Vitani, Interim Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health, Martin County. “With this widespread activity, it is essential that people take steps to protect themselves through good handwashing and vaccination.”

On August 1, Florida Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees declared a [Public Health Emergency](#) to address the increase in hepatitis A cases in Florida. The declaration signals to health care providers the importance of screening and vaccination for all individuals considered at high risk for contracting hepatitis A. While anyone can contract hepatitis A, individuals who are considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and FDOH to be high risk include: those who are experiencing homelessness; intravenous and non-intravenous drug users and men who have sex with other men. The declaration also recommends vaccination for individuals or who are at heightened risk for suffering serious complications from contracting hepatitis A. This includes individuals with chronic liver disease, clotting factor disorders and individuals over 60 years of age with underlying medical conditions.

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a contagious disease that attacks the liver. The virus is found in the stool of people who are infected and is commonly spread through person to person contact. Infection occurs when someone ingests the virus. While normally not fatal, persons with chronic disease, compromised immune systems and the elderly are more likely to experience a severe illness, leading to liver failure and possible death.

Vaccinate to Prevent the Spread of Hepatitis A

The hepatitis A vaccine is available in the community via healthcare providers and local pharmacies. The Florida Department of Health in Martin County at 3441 SE Willoughby Blvd., Stuart offers free hepatitis A vaccinations for uninsured, underinsured and at-risk adults (ages 19 and older) on a walk-in basis, Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm.

Practicing good hand hygiene also helps to prevent the spread of hepatitis A. Alcohol based hand sanitizers do not kill the virus. Washing hands with soap and water after changing diapers,

and before preparing, serving or eating food is key to stopping the spread of hepatitis A and other germs.

Seek Medical Treatment if Experiencing Symptoms:

Anyone experiencing symptoms of hepatitis A, including fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, diarrhea, clay colored bowel movements, joint pain and jaundice (yellow skin/eyes) should contact their healthcare provider immediately for evaluation and testing.

Inform, Educate & Vaccinate

Health Department staff in Martin County are working with many community partners to provide education and vaccination throughout the community. Since April, there have been approximately 10,500 doses of the hepatitis A vaccine dispensed in Martin County, with Health Department staff providing about 2,800 of those doses.

Hepatitis A surveillance data available here:

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/vaccine-preventable-disease/hepatitis-a/surveillance-data/index.html>

Additional Resources:

The Florida Department of Health has launched an information line, email box and a website to address general questions about Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A, Information Line:

1-844-CALL-DOH (1-844-225-5364) available Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Website: www.Floridahealth.gov/hepa

Email questions: HepA@flhealth.gov

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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